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Missions set in 'America's Playground'

TAHOE CITY, Calif. (Special) — After more than two decades as a resort missionary in Lake Tahoe — known as "America's Year-Round Playground" — Debbie Wohler remains as passionate as ever about the mission to which God has called her.

"Often in Scripture, it looks like it's the small things — you know, the salt, the light, the yeast, the seed in the soil — that add up to big things," said Wohler, who serves in the scenic resort area that is home to 12 million visitors each year. "I think a lot of times we want to see the big things without having done the small things."

Wohler is among nearly 5,200 missionaries in the United States and Canada supported by the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. She is featured during the March 7-14 Week of Prayer, which this year focuses on The World at Our Doorstep.

Many Mississippi Baptists remember Wohler as the determined campaigner who a few years ago collected enough Campbell's Soup can labels to acquire a brand new van for the ministry she serves. A number of Mississippi Baptist churches helped her by sending several thousand labels.

Among the "small things" Wohler values are children. Her schedule includes serving through First Church of Tahoe City, which offers a before- and after-school program and childcare services several weekday mornings and evenings. She also leads a children's day camp during the summer, and from Christmas through Easter she serves as a chaplain for six ski resorts.

"I wonder what God is going to do in these kids' lives, and they're still babies," she said. "They're barely walking, but I begin to dream and hope and pray for these children. Jesus said if you want to come into the Kingdom that you need to come like a child," she said. "I actually



'PLAYGROUND' MINISTRY — Missionary Debbie Wohler (right) escorts a child through heavy snow to a waiting church van. The child was one of several from Tahoe Community Nursery School who are brought to the church for the A+ Before and After Program. (BR special photo By Gibbs Frazeur)

think the best years are ahead because there has been a ton of seed planting."

Her face lights up as she talks about the children who grew up under her ministry and are now taking the Gospel throughout the world in places such as China, Yemen, Amsterdam, Africa, Mexico, Spain, and Moldova.

"I want to raise a generation of people who love God and who serve God," she said. "I want to teach them how to pray, minister, and not be afraid to talk to people about Jesus and what's happened in their heart."

Wohler, who grew up in Fairfield, Ill., first came to Lake Tahoe in 1975 as a summer missionary while in college. After graduating from seminary, she served as a chaplain for two years at the Olympic Training Center in Squaw Valley, California, before returning to Lake Tahoe as a career resort missionary.

For more on resort missions through the North American Mission Board, including ideas for how your church can get involved, visit www.namb.net/evangelism/specialministries.

The World at Our Doorstep

Week of Prayer
for North American Missions
Suggested Dates: March 7-14, 2004



National Goal: \$54,000,000

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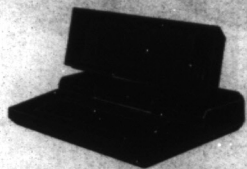
Miss. CP drops in Feb.

Gifts to the work of the Lord through the Mississippi Cooperative Program (CP) in February fell from the previous month's total and also from the same period a year ago, according to Jim Futral, executive director of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board which disburses the funds. The February 2004 total of \$1,987,796, was \$256,785, or 11.4%, below giving in February 2003. Giving was down \$1,200,514, or 37.7%, from the previous month, but January 2004 was the third-highest monthly total in the history of the convention. The drop in giving is 9.91% below the same two-month period last year, and keeps 2004 Mississippi CP gifts only 0.65% above budgetary needs. A total of \$2,571,248 is needed each month to meet the convention board's budget for 2004. The 2004 Mississippi CP budget of \$30,854,971 was approved by messengers to the 2003 annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. In addition to supporting more than 10,700 missionaries in the U.S. and around the world through affiliation with the Southern Baptist Convention, Mississippi CP helps fund such programs as the GA Mother/Daughter Overnight March 26-27 at Camp Garaywa in Clinton; the Young Ministers' Retreat March 26-27 at Central Hills Retreat near Kosciusko; and the Young Ringers Festival on March 27 at Alta Woods Church, Jackson.

SBC CP down for month

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — February receipts of \$14,967,782.15 for the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Cooperative Program (CP) were down 15.37%, or \$2,718,659.39, compared the \$17,686,441.54 received in February 2003. However, year-to-date contributions through the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Cooperative Program are up 1.81% compared to the same time frame in 2003, according to a news release from SBC Executive Committee President and Chief Executive Officer Morris H. Chapman. As of Feb. 29, 2004, the year-to-date total of \$80,339,762.24 for Cooperative Program (CP) Missions is \$1,424,476.92 ahead of the \$78,915,285.32 received at this same point in 2003. Designated giving of \$93,753,122.74 for the same year-to-date period is 12.53%, or \$10,442,812.40, above gifts of \$83,310,310.34 received at this point in 2003. The \$54,423,409.63 in designated gifts received last month is \$4,335,638.27 above the \$50,087,771.36 of February 2003, an 8.66% increase. For the SBC Cooperative Program Allocation Budget, the year-to-date total of \$80,339,762.24 is 105.75 percent of the \$75,967,962.50 budgeted, or \$4,371,799.74 above budget to support Southern Baptist ministries globally and across North America. The SBC operates on an Oct. 1-Sept. 30 fiscal year.

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'Plan B' not such a good idea

To all the "socially conservative groups" who mounted a "concerted campaign" to make the morning-after abortion pill a victim of "election year politics," millions of unborn babies say a resounding thank-you.

While MSNBC Reporter Kari Huus, who filed the March 5 article from which the above quotes were pulled from the first few paragraphs, apparently failed the portions of her journalism classes that dealt with balanced reporting and the avoidance of loaded words, the news she reports is nonetheless encouraging to pro-lifers.

The issue over which Huus expresses such unalloyed dismay is the recent Food and Drug Administration (FDA) decision to postpone approval of over-the-counter sales of Plan B, the brand name for a witch's brew of powerful synthetic hormones that can induce abortion if ingested within 72 hours of conception. The delay is a little step, but it's still a step in the right direction.

Plan B proponents argue that a woman is not technically pregnant until her fertilized egg attaches itself to the lining of the uterus — which Plan B prevents. Therefore, no abortion actually takes place because no pregnancy actually takes place. (Yes, they really believe that, just as they believe in the U.S. Supreme Court's laughable *Roe v. Wade* trimester calendar of fetal development.)

Opponents of Plan B say that it's dangerous to flood a woman's body with such a huge blast of synthetic hormones, that Plan B will become just another routine form of contraceptive, and that virtually no research exists to indicate the drugs' effects on the bodies of teen users and younger women — who are widely expected to be the most frequent users of the product.

Those concerns prompted a letter from

49 members of Congress to FDA Commissioner Mark McClellan, expressing their doubts about the FDA's rush to approve the drug and its unresearched long-term effects. The letter and its attendant public outcry, which led to the 90-day postponement of FDA approval, must be what Huus viewed as the "concerted campaign" by "socially conservative groups" to engineer the drug's downfall via "election year politics."

Meanwhile, a pharmacist recently lost his job for refusing to fill a prescription for Plan B, which has been available with a doctor's prescription for many years. It seems that Gene Herr of Denton, Texas, wouldn't fill the prescription that was written by an emergency room physician treating a woman who said she had been raped. Herr was subsequently fired by the Eckerd's drug store chain.

"I don't think it's fair to be forced to participate in a chain of events that results in the taking of a life," Herr told Associated Press (AP). Eckerd spokeswoman Jan Gallagher countered to AP that the company employment manual makes it clear that pharmacists are never allowed to decline to fill a prescription for moral or religious reasons.



This is a strange, perverse society in which we live today, isn't it? The shedding of innocent blood increases every day as we discover ever-easier ways to snuff out life before it even begins, while a morally-upright person can lose his job and possibly his career for standing by his beliefs.

As the old axiom goes — If God doesn't punish America soon, He's going to have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah. Which of those two actions do you think God is more likely to take?

This time of year has traditionally been a very special one in Southern Baptist life as we focus on the mission of reaching North America for Christ and we celebrate the missionaries who are ministering in the spiritual outposts of our homeland. It's also a time to lift up the needs of the mission to reach North America.

As Southern Baptists prepare to give to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions, I want to express my deep gratitude and offer a reminder of our ongoing needs. One hundred percent of the Annie offering supports our missionaries and their ministries in the United States and Canada. It pays their salaries, health benefits and directly funds activities such as starting new churches, proclaiming the Gospel on college campuses, and meeting human needs. It pays for the work North American Mission Board (NAMB) missionaries are doing in community ministry settings and in local Southern Baptist associations.

Giving to the Annie Armstrong Offering is critical to keeping our missionaries on the field and to placing new missionaries in the areas of greatest need. Currently nearly 200 North American missionary positions

GUEST OPINION:

Reaching N. America for Christ in 2004



By Robert E. Reccord, president
North American Mission Board

are vacant — most because NAMB and state Baptist conventions lack the budget dollars to fill the positions.

Without increased giving that will allow us to outpace the rising cost of health insurance and other fixed expenses, we will continue losing ground on the mission field. In the mean-

time, we have stopped recruiting full-time missionaries due to the current shortfall. Already, areas of need are going unfilled as we and our state partners are unable to fund approved missionary positions.

This is also why I encourage you to give generously to your state Baptist convention's

annual mission offering as well. The missions partnership will only remain strong if we continue supporting missions at every level of need.

During this season, I hope you will have a chance to learn more about and pray for our missionary heroes who are serving sacrificially throughout our land. Missionaries like An Van Pham who risked everything escaping with his young family from communist Vietnam in a rickety boat. Today he's a NAMB missionary starting churches in Georgia for immigrants from Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, China and other Asian nations. Missionary Stephanie Smith in Minnesota who leads hockey training camps as a way of creating opportunities to share the Gospel. And, missionaries Michael and Michelle Dean who share Christ with international college students in Boston.

These missionaries each have remarkable stories of how God called them to their ministries and some took unimaginable risks to follow His leading.

Please remember to pray for them and to pray for God's leading about your support of them by giving to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering this year.



Missionaries share Christ at 'ends of earth'

KIANA, Alaska (Special) — God first began working in John and Kim Piepmeier's lives through their local church, but it wasn't long before they were involved in full-time service and finally to a land that is about as close to "the ends of the earth" as anywhere.

Their ministry is now to Kiana Baptist Mission and the people of Kiana, a remote Native Alaskan village above the Arctic Circle where the only Hondas around are small "four-wheeler" all-terrain vehicles. In the wintertime, when temperatures can reach 50 degrees below zero, a snowmobile is the family car.

For the Eskimos who live there, this is life as usual. For these Missouri natives — as with any missionaries called to a radically different environment — it is the certainty of God's call that has helped them adjust.

"The Bible tells us that the Lord has many offices and places where He wants each of us, and I feel that's what He's done with us," said John. "He's equipped us with the ability to handle it and enjoy it here. I don't think it takes any kind of special person. It was just being available, and really seeking after the Lord."

The Piepmeiers are among nearly 5,200 missionaries in the United States and Canada supported by the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. They are featured during the March 7-14 Week of Prayer, which this year focuses on The World at Our Doorstep.

John and Kim were 36 years old when they accepted Christ, and it was three or four years later that they began to feel God might be calling them to full-time ministry as Mission Service Corps missionaries. The program allows missionaries to serve under the auspices of the North American Mission Board but with responsibility for raising their own personal financial support. In their case, God worked through the circumstances of a motorcycle accident that left John partially paralyzed and on a disability pension.

They first served in resort ministry at Lake of the Ozarks in their home state, and by August of 1999 they felt God wanted them in Alaska. They learned of the need in Kiana, and within a few weeks they were ready to leave. Confirmation of their decision came when they were able to sell their house, car and personal belongings within three weeks — even a piano that had found no buyers previously.

"We just knew that the Lord had directed us there," said John. "Some people say, 'Well, how can you be away from your family?' but the Lord just kind of prepared our hearts for everything, including the remoteness of Kiana."



FOUR-WHEEL MINISTRY — John and Kim Piepmeier (at left) talk with a pair of young men in Kiana, Alaska, from the back of their four-wheeler, which serves as their family vehicle during the summer months. During the winter, snowmobiles like the ones pictured are the preferred form of transportation in the remote Eskimo village. (BR special photo by Gibbs Frazeur)

As they got out of the plane that fall, they were awed by the natural beauty of the landscape and the Northern Lights. But they also had to adjust to the reasons the area is so sparsely populated. Most food — or anything else — is flown in to Kiana's small airstrip. Milk is \$5 for a half gallon; bleach is \$20 a gallon. When they visit the nearest warehouse club in Anchorage, a \$500 round-trip flight for one person, they bring along several Rubbermaid storage containers to mail their purchases home.

"The way of life is just very different," John said. There's no reason to get worked up or worried about anything unless it's life-threatening; even then there is no reason to get worked up. If anything goes wrong or needs to get fixed, you do it yourself. You can't call a service guy or technician."

The ministry to children and youth is also strong, with a Good News Club offered on Friday afternoons and a youth group every Sunday night. Sunday attendance is often made up of more children than adults.

Record

As in other areas, there is a problem with substance abuse and depression, even suicide. Poverty itself is not a major issue, with many holding good jobs in the oil industry or at the nearby Red Dog Mine — the largest zinc mine in the world, but the people often feel trapped.

The Piepmeiers are making a difference. Since they arrived 73 people have accepted Christ as Lord of their life.

Mission Service Corps (MSC) missionaries like the Piepmeiers are self-supporting or raise their own support. The Annie Armstrong Easter Offering funds supplementary support for some MSC missionaries, including the Piepmeiers.

All MSC missionaries receive training, materials, and other assistance.

Annie Armstrong

The woman for whom the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions was named lived from 1850-1938, but her boldness and commitment to missions during her lifetime continue to serve as a model for today. Her strong commitment to taking the gospel to Native Americans and immigrants came as a result of listening to missionaries' stories about the needs of these groups. She personalized that commitment by serving her church and leading women to minister to immigrants arriving at the Baltimore pier. She also traveled to Indian territory to minister personally to the Native Americans. While she could not be hands-on all the time, she encouraged women to make up boxes of supplies for missionaries in order that they could be better equipped to take the gospel to all people. Annie also served as the first corresponding secretary of Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), which began in 1888. It was a job she did wholeheartedly and without pay. Writing about her work, Annie said: "I am more and more persuaded that all that is required of those who have the work in charge is faithful seed sowing. The harvest is bound to follow. No matter how heavy the burden, daily strength is given, so I expect we need not give ourselves any concern as to what the outcome will be, but think 'go forward.'" (Sorrill, Bobbie, *Annie Armstrong: Dreamer in Action*, 1984, Broadman Press, p. 155.) Annie indeed "went forward" with her support of missions. Her capacity to write letters advocating mission work has been well documented. She wrote literally thousands of letters every year, and in one year alone that number topped 18,000. She spoke in churches to spark the interest of women to take seriously a commitment to missions and support Southern Baptist missionaries. It was fitting that the offering which benefited the missionaries she so dearly loved and supported was named in her honor in 1936. Annie Armstrong died in 1938, and her tombstone reads, "She hath done what she could."



Armstrong

Looking back

10 years ago

The breakdown of American family life can be reversed by a concerted emphasis on the role of the husband and father in the traditional two-parent family, where husbands and wives share mutual affection and respect and where children are disciplined in love, say speakers at the SBC Christian Life Commission's "Family in Crisis" annual seminar in Oklahoma City.

20 years ago

Stepping up his offensive for restoring organized prayer to the nation's public schools, President Reagan calls on citizens to pressure the U.S. Congress to pass his pending constitutional prayer amendment during his weekly radio address from Camp David in Maryland.

50 years ago

Calvary Church, Jackson, leads the state in giving to the Cooperative Program in the first quarter of 1954. The church gave \$13,250, followed by First Church, Jackson, with \$11,666; First Church, Gulfport, with \$9,498; First Church, Columbus, with \$8,26; and First Church, Grenada, with \$6,623.



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The World at Our Doorstep

Week of Prayer
for North American Missions
Suggested Dates: March 7-14, 2004



National Goal: \$54,000,000

www.anniearmstrong.com

Petal-Harvey garners second Eagle Award

PETAL, Miss. (Special) — Petal-Harvey Church in Petal was recognized on January 25 with its second Eagle Award in two years for outstanding Sunday School growth. The award was presented by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) in Jackson and LifeWay Christian Resources in Nashville.

Present for the award presentation were John Clendinning, consultant in the MBCB Sunday School Department; Petal-Harvey Church Pastor David Grumbach; Minister of Education Wendell Frazier; Sunday School Director Mike Lott; and Mike May, growth consultant.

The church's Sunday School enrollment has grown from 993 people five years ago to the present enrollment of 1,757. Average attendance has risen from 380 people to nearly 800 in the same time period. Annual baptisms have also climbed from 24 in 1999 to 81 in 2003.

On the Sunday morning that the award was presented, the church's Sunday School program passed a significant milestone when the program was reorganized into two hours of Bible Study with two simultaneous worship services. The day was billed as M&M Sunday, with M&M standing for "Multiple Ministries." A high attendance goal of 1,000 for the special day was exceeded by 106 people.

"Sunday School growth is always a product of multiplication of classes, workers, ministries, and even space," said Frazier. "Our people really liked the theme for this campaign and I believe they understand that we have a great



FLYING HIGH — Petal-Harvey Church, Petal, was recently presented with the church's second Eagle Award in recognition of outstanding Sunday School growth during the past year. Present for the award presentation were (from left) John Clendinning, consultant in the MBCB Sunday School Department; Petal-Harvey Church Pastor David Grumbach; Minister of Education Wendell Frazier; Sunday School Director Mike Lott; and Mike May, growth consultant. (BR special photo)

strategy for accomplishing the church's mission through the Sunday School."

"I am very pleased with the effort and hard work of our people and how they respond to challenges, but I and our church can never become satisfied as long as there is one lost person still to be reached for Christ," said Grumbach.

Sunday School growth strategies and

the Eagle Awards are supported by gifts to the Mississippi Cooperative Program. For more information on the Eagle Awards program or Sunday School growth in general, contact Clendinning at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3374 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 374. E-mail: jclendinning@mbcb.org.

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National Goal: \$54,000,000

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One hundred percent of Annie Armstrong Easter Offering funds directly support North American Mission Board (NAMB) missionaries and their ministries. These funds ensure 5,200 missionaries in the United States, Canada and U.S. territories are equipped with salaries, benefits, and supplies to sustain their ministries and impact as many people as possible with the good news of Jesus Christ.

Gifts to the 2004 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering will benefit the following mission endeavors:

- **75% (\$40,500,000):** Missionary Support includes salaries (the majority of missionaries are jointly funded by state conventions and NAMB); health benefits; missionary orientation; ongoing missionary training expenses.

- **16% (\$8,640,000):** Church Planting support includes start-up funds for new churches, such as: rental of facilities; materials; promotional expenses.

- **Nine percent (\$4,860,000):** Evangelism support includes projects that undergird missionaries' work, such as Scripture distribution; sports evangelism; special evangelism events; Internet evangelism; Media campaigns.

• **Total: \$54,000,000**

GET THE FACTS

In his recently released book, *Give Me a Break*, John Stossel tells about a conversation he had with presidential candidate Al Sharpton.

Sharpton was complaining about the fact that the richest people in America paid only two percent in taxes. Stossel asked him how much he would like to see rich people pay and Sharpton's reply was five percent.

The reporter then asked Mr. Sharpton if it would be surprising to him that those in the top tier of wealth in America already pay over 30% of their income in taxes. To that revelation Al Sharpton gave no response; he simply changed the subject and kept on talking.

The point is that it is important to get the facts before you make decisions or speak on issues. Yet, sometimes we do not want the facts because they may confuse us or contradict our position.

Recently I had a call from a man who was concerned that we were doing less in our state than we had been doing in the past in two significant and vital areas of work: Church Planting and Evangelism. He had been told of cutbacks in our funding of these two areas and he was concerned. I would be, too!

In reality, what the man had been told was both true and untrue. The truth is that in the budget some changes have been made, not to



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

reduce our support of church starts and evangelistic efforts, but to see that they permeate virtually every area of our work. Here are the facts:

- Ed Deuschle and Don Lum were both in the Evangelism Department and both of them were doing a good job, but after much prayer, thought, and conversation we felt that they could do a greater job by carrying their evangelistic fervor into other areas of work in our Convention structure.

Dollars that were accounted for under the Evangelism line item in the Cooperative Program budget are now listed in Church Planting and Sunday School.

- Deuschle has led us in formulating a wonderful church planting strategy resulting in the most church starts and significant growth than we have experienced in decades.

Almost \$500,000 per year is generated for church planting through the Margaret Lackey State Mission Offering and

our partnerships with the North American Mission Board, local associations, and sponsoring churches.

- Lum has joined with the Sunday School team in helping develop what we believe will be not only a major Sunday School growth and outreach emphasis, but a wonderfully effective one!

- Collaborative strategies with the North American Mission Board and local associations channel more than \$150,000 per year into direct evangelism initiatives all across our state.

What may have looked like a reduction in emphasis on Evangelism has only been transfers which have broadened the emphasis and impact in evangelism and church starts. Is anything good coming out of those changes? Absolutely! It has enabled us to help and participate in 27 new church starts. In just those churches we have seen 362 baptisms.

In addition, God is raising

up people with a calling, a vision, and a drive to plant new churches and reach people for Jesus. We are not trying to do less, but more!

The facts — all the facts — are vitally important. When you only get part of the information and see only a part of the picture, it may look strange. For instance, one day I was getting on an elevator at the Baptist Building and from where I stood you could see one of the display areas. From where I was standing and from where the display was, this is what I read: "The ear is the Lord's." I thought to myself, "How strange!" I wondered why they would put up a sign that says, "The ear is the Lord's."

I went away contemplating that thought and actually began to think that it made sense. God wants to speak to us and Jesus said, "If you have ears to hear, hear." Yet still, I didn't quite understand, "The ear is the Lord's!"

Some time later I passed by that display area again and saw what had previously been blocked from my sight. The display actually said, "The earth is the Lord's." It was a meaningful display about our stewardship.

Now, whether it is "The earth is the Lord's," or "The ear is the Lord's," we have a responsibility of understanding, as best we can, the totality of the work.

It helps to get all the facts we can!

Ministry reaches into hockey community |

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. (Special) — As a professional athletic trainer and emergency medical technician, Stephanie Smith never imagined working the sidelines of a hockey game. With little knowledge or interest in the rough-and-tumble sport, the cold, icy rink generally epitomized her attitude toward it.

"I grew up in Missouri where hockey wasn't that popular, and I developed a negative view of the game and those who were involved in it," Smith said. "I had only attended two games. A fight broke out in the stands at one, and I had beer spilled on me at the other. I mistakenly assumed that most hockey players had made an intentional choice that they didn't want to follow God, not that they just don't know Him."

Her perspective changed after a late-night emergency room encounter on Oct. 31, 1993. While filling in for a friend who worked with an amateur hockey team, she found herself dealing with both a serious head injury and a waiting-room brawl between opposing players. She not only broke up the fight, but also led the roomful of angry players in prayer for their injured colleague.

"After everyone settled down, people began asking me about what they described in me as a 'quiet strength,' she recounted. "I shared with them the hope that I have in knowing that God is in control. That Halloween night I discovered

my medical training and my faith naturally work together and are a perfect fit for working in the hockey community."

Since then, Smith has used her platform to foster a growing Christian influence in the amateur hockey community. Most recently, she and her husband, Ross, started the Twin Cities Northern Lights junior league hockey team — a team founded on distinctly Christian principles that last year defied all expectations to win a state championship and place fifth in the USA Hockey national tournament.

Through their youth evangelism role with the Minnesota-Wisconsin Southern Baptist Convention, the Smiths also are among nearly 5,200 missionaries in the United States and Canada supported by the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. They are featured during the March 7-14 Week of Prayer, which this year focuses on The World at Our Doorstep.

Smith's role as a hockey trainer involves working with both a private high school as well as a junior hockey team. Unlike most seasonal sports, hockey is a way of life in Minnesota with the junior hockey season lasting from August through May, followed by a summer league and other camps and tryouts. She also helps local churches learn how they can reach out to youth in their own communities.

When people need trusted advice about life outside of



hockey they turn to the Smiths.

"It's astonishing how frequently players or coaches will bring up spiritual issues and ask us to show them what the Bible says about it," Stephanie said.

"It's amazing to me that God has allowed us to be a part of what He is obviously orchestrating. He is trying to get the attention of people in the hockey community, and let them know that He loves them and would like to have a personal relationship with them. To so many people we've met, this is

brand-new information. I know God has put us in this place at this time to help reach the hockey community for Christ.

"I know that prayer is not a normal course of approved treatment, nor is quoting Scripture, or giving godly encouragement, but I know that God places each of us where He wills so that we can help show others what a relationship with Jesus is about, and He placed me here for this time. I have never been turned down when I offered to pray," she said.

GO TEAM! — Stephanie Smith celebrates a goal with the Minnesota Northern Lights ice hockey team, which she serves as athletic trainer. She and her husband Ross founded the Northern Lights in 2002 as a way of reaching the ice hockey community with the gospel. (BR special photo by Gary S. Chapman)

Work taking root in nation's poorest large city

MIAMI, Fla. (Special) — To say Michael Daily likes a challenge would be an understatement. Ministering in the midst of disaster has almost become routine for the Missouri native, a North American missionary who has served as director of church and community ministries with the Miami Baptist Association for the past 17 years.

Daily helps Miami's nearly 300 Southern Baptist churches minister to the needs of thousands of people each year, many of whom lack basic necessities such as food, clothing, shelter and healthcare.

As they share the Good News of Jesus Christ, these ministries help people rebuild lives after devastating hurricanes; feed and

clothe the homeless and refugees who pour into the city from Central America, Europe and Africa; and empower communities paralyzed by poverty through healthcare, education and job training.

In a city of 3.5 million people, the needs can seem overwhelming — at times almost hopeless. Yet what most people might see as insurmountable problems, Daily recognizes as opportunities for God to change lives.

Daily and his wife Ana are among nearly 5,200 missionaries in the United States and Canada supported by the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. They are featured during the March 7-14 Week of Prayer and North American Mission Study, which this year focus on The World at Our Doorstep.

Daily said all aspects of his work have proved repeatedly that, regardless of ethnicity or culture, people respond to the message of Christ when met at their point of need.

"It produces an intimacy that allows us to speak the truth, and consequently it's heard as the truth. I think that Miami/Dade County must surely be one place where the world has definitely come to our doorstep.

"There are people here, in huge numbers, from every single Spanish speaking country, province and location. You'll hear languages from Asia, Europe, and Africa, and as we reach people for Christ who return to these different countries, they take the Gospel message back with them," he said.

The efforts are making an impact, including many new churches that have seen professions of faith from individuals who have first had their physical needs met through the various ministries.



ANOTHER VICTORY — Rocio Velazquez, who has just accepted Christ as Lord of her life, prays with her daughter and Mike Daily, church and community ministries director for the Miami Baptist Association. Through helping churches meet the many physical needs of recent immigrants in the Miami area, Daily gains opportunities to lead people to faith in Christ. (BR special photo By Ken Touchton)

The World at Our Doorstep

**Week of Prayer
for North American Missions**
Suggested Dates: March 7-14, 2004

ANNIE ARMSTRONG
EASTER OFFERING
FOR NORTH AMERICAN MISSIONS

National Goal: \$54,000,000

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JUST FOR THE RECORD

Rec. Lance McElhenney and Red. Cory Brooks were honored recently at a reception at Faith Church, West Point, where they were both members of the youth group. Now they have finished their basic training at Parris Island they will be stationed at Camp Lejeune, South Carolina. Pictured (from left) are McElhenney and Brooks.

McElhenney and Brooks

West Side Church, Macon, recognized Odell Higginbotham for 35 plus years of service as a deacon February 22. Higginbotham was presented with a certificate and Bible.

Calvary Church, Pascagoula, will hold a spring break music camp April 5-9 from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. for children grades 4-6. Ellen Carter and Claudia Hawkins are the directors. The cost is \$75. Scholarships are available. Call (228) 762-1338 to register.

Cedar View Church, Olive Branch, will hold a community sing featuring The

Revelations Quartet March 20 at 6 p.m. Call (662) 895-2661 for more information.

First Church, Madison, will hold a women's conference, When the Heavens Call, March 26-27. Gaye Martin is the guest speaker. Times are Friday at 6:30 p.m. and Saturday at 9 a.m. The cost is \$15 including dinner on Friday and refreshments on Saturday. Sign up by March 17 by visiting



Martin

www.fbcmadison.org or call (601) 856-6177, ext. 203.

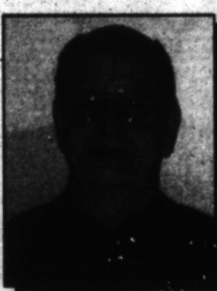
Flowood Church, Flowood, will hold the ladies prayer retreat, A Cup of Contentment, The Joy of Being Content, March 26-27. Edna Arrington-Miller is the speaker. Sold Out to Christ will provide music. The registration deadline is March 21. For pricing and registration, call (601) 992-6464.

Cooke Memorial Church, Houlika, will present the Mattingly Family, a gospel group, in concert March 14 at 11 a.m. A free will offering will be taken. Buck Morton is pastor.

STAFF CHANGES

Springdale Church, Attala and Luther Rice Seminary.

Association, has called Ladell Blanton (pictured) as pastor. He has served in Alabama as director of associational missions for Bethlehem and Pine Barren Associations for five years. He previously served as pastor of First Church, Foxworth, and First Church, Tchula.



Blanton

Blanton holds degrees from Mississippi College, NOBTS, vice times, call (662) 323-8782 or (662) 324-0955.

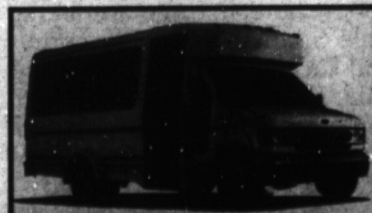
Fellowship Church, Starkville, has called John Henry Shackelford as pastor effective February 1. Shackelford comes from Valley Grove Church, Tupelo and is a graduate of Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary.

For information or ser-

www.mbcab.org

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HOMECOMINGS & REVIVALS

First, Madison: Revival Mar. 28-31; Sunday, 6:30 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Chip Henderson and Jeff Askew, Pinelake, Brandon, revival team.

Benton, Benton: Revival Mar. 21-24; Sunday, 10:30 a.m. and 5 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Danny Berry, evangelist; R.L. and Beth Sigrest, music evangelists; Charles Moore, pastor; for more information, call (662) 673-9708.

Springdale, Kosciusko: Revival Mar. 21-23; Sunday, 9:45 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. and Tues., 7 p.m.; Wayne Hudson, Complete in Christ Ministries, Kosciusko, speaker; Hudson's wife, Tina, will share her testimony; Ladell Blanton, pastor.

New Life, McLain: Revival Mar. 21-24; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Jerry Chaddick, evangelist; Jerry Rawls, pastor; all are welcome.

Bassfield, Bassfield: Revival Mar. 28-31; Sunday, 10 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; David Shepherd, Laurel, evangelist; Ken Roberts, pastor.

Westwood, Meridian: Revival Mar. 21-24; Sunday, 10:30 a.m. and 5 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., noon and 7 p.m.; Paul Harris, Dutch Town Church, Prairieville, La., evangelist; Chris Lee, music; Richard Davis, pastor.

Hickory, Hickory: Revival Apr. 4-7; Danny Lanier, Little Rock, preaching and music; Rodney Anderson, pastor.

Unity, Moselle: Revival Mar. 28-Apr. 2; Sunday, 9:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.; Mon.-Fri., 7 p.m.; nursery provided; Jamie Coulter, evangelist; Valton Douglas, pastor.

www.mbcab.org

Holly Springs, Foxworth: Homecoming Mar. 21; Sunday School, 10 a.m.; business meeting, 10:45 a.m.; music, Foxfire, 11 a.m.; a covered dish lunch will be served; all proceeds are for the cemetery fund; Glen McInnis, pastor.

Carey Chapel, Red Banks: Revival Mar. 21-24; Sunday, 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Bill Hardin, preaching; Andy Roe, music; O.E. Langner, Jr., pastor.

First Ozona, Carriere: Revival Apr. 25-30; Sunday, 6 p.m.; Mon.-Fri., 7 p.m.; Clark Stewart, Harmony, Crystal Springs, evangelist; Ray Walker, Pontotoc, music evangelist; John Graeter, interim pastor.

Rolling Creek, Quitman: Revival Mar. 14-17; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Randall Creel, Lake, evangelist; Steve and Becky Carver, music evangelists; Ronnie Cooper, interim pastor; Lamar Callahan, interim music director; all are welcome.

New Hope, Sumrall: Revival Mar. 21-24; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Dewey Smith, evangelist; Bob Thames, musician; George Gerald Aultman, interim pastor.

Woodland Hills, Jackson: Deaf Revival Mar. 26-28; Fri., 6 p.m. and 7 p.m.; Sat., 10 a.m., 10:45 a.m., 11:15 a.m., noon luncheon, 6 p.m., and 7 p.m.; Sunday, 9:30 a.m., 10:45 a.m., and a covered dish meal at noon; Ricky Milford, Faith Baptist Deaf Mission, Talladega, Ala., worship and Bible study leader; Tyler Pigott, pastor; for more information, contact (601) 956-2593 or pastor@whbcjackson.org.

Enterprise, Myrtle: Revival March 10-14; Larry Winkler, Lenoir, N.C., evangelist; Tony B. Monk, pastor.

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Mississippi Positions

STEWARDSHIP SECRETARY POSITION open, First Baptist Church, Jackson. Contact Ken Lundquist, Business Administrator at (601) 949-1927.

CASTLEWOODS BAPTIST CHURCH in Brandon, MS is seeking a mature christian individual or couple to make a long-term commitment to serve as youth leader(s) on a bi-vocational basis. Please mail your resume to: 175 Stonecastle Drive, Brandon, MS 39047 or email paula@castlewoods baptist.com.

COVINGTON-JEFFERSON DAVIS BAPTIST ASSOCIATION is now accepting resumes for the position of Associational Missions Director. Send resumes to Covington-Jefferson Davis Baptist Association, attn: personnel committee, 310 Hwy 35, Collins, MS 39428. Deadline for receiving resumes is 4/1/04.

JUST FOR THE RECORD

Calvary Chapel, Parchman, recently completed the W.D. and Earline Kirk Family Life Center. The late W.D. Kirk served as Parchman chaplain at one time. The building includes space for Sunday School and recreation which is available to youth and families in the community. Pictured is Earline.

Steven Ray Phillips was licensed to preach January 25. Phillips is a member of Bellevue Church, Thaxton. Pictured (from left) are Phillips and Tommy Inmon, pastor.

Gladys Brock and Mable Everett recently attended Hats off to Lottie Moon at Calvary Church, Braxton. The program included carols, Scriptures, mission comments, food, and fellowship.

Fourteen RAs and GAs of Sunrise Church, Petal, went on a hike at Paul B. Johnson State Park February 21. Debbie Kitchens is the RA leader and Amy McCardle is the GA leader.

Woodland Hills Church, Jackson, exceeded the Lottie Moon goal in 2003 by \$7,273. The Annie Armstrong goal was \$7,000 and \$7,500 was given. The State Mission goal was \$4,000 and it was exceeded by \$57. The World Relief goal was \$500 and \$515 was given. Tyler Pigott is pastor and Shirley Fulton is coordinator of mission giving.

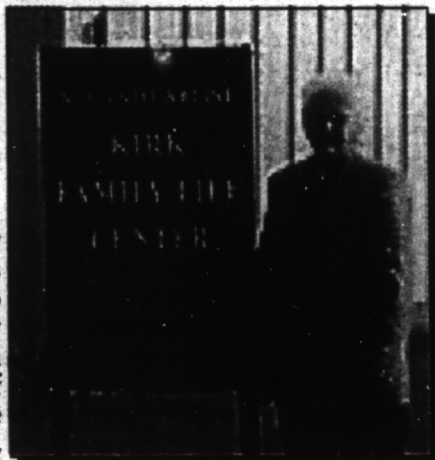
Woodland Hills Church, Jackson, honored Patsy Simpson with a reception upon her retirement as church organist after 28 years. The reception followed a concert by the honoree. Margaret McKenzie was the pianist, Jonathan Kilgore led worship, and Aaron Graham accompa-

nied on the trumpet. Simpson currently serves as president of the Music Forum, Jackson, and she is a member of the Jackson Chapter of the American Guild of Organists. She is a Mississippi College graduate.

The women's ministry of First Church, Louisville, will sponsor a women's conference, Piecing It Together, April 3. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. The program is from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Joy Emery, former minister of edu-

cation/youth is the speaker. Tickets are \$20 including lunch. Childcare is provided. For more information, call (662) 773-6246.

Friendship Church, Pontotoc County, will hold an open bid church auction March 13 at 10 a.m. Church pews, light fixtures, kitchen and bath cabinets and fixtures, doors, chairs, tables, and much more will be auctioned. All proceeds go towards the new building fund. Lunch will be provided by the youth group. For more information, call (662) 419-2222.



Earline Kirk



Gladys Brock and Mable Everett



GAs & RAs of Sunrise Church, Petal



Steven Ray Phillips and Tommy Inmon, pastor

COLLEGE NEWS

William Carey College Theatre will present Georg Buchner's expressionist drama Woyzeck March 11-13 at 8 p.m. in the O. L. Quave Theatre, Hattiesburg campus. The WCC Theatre is co-sponsored by Bancorp South. Seats may be reserved by calling (601) 318-6221. The box office will be open daily from 1-4 p.m. beginning March 8. Admission is \$10, senior citizens and military personnel are \$8, and students are \$5. Pictured (from left) are Joel King and James Stewart, Hattiesburg, and Vicky Hall, Raleigh, during a scene from Woyzeck.

gram, checked other universities across the nation to find a program they felt would meet their needs. Their pick was MC. They found that the MC Aquatic Program had earned national recognition as the Top College Water Fitness Program in the U.S.; Top College Aquatic Program in the U.S.; Top Aquatic Program in Mississippi; Top Water Exercise Programs in the U.S.; Top Aquatic Programs; and Top Aquatic Directors in the U.S., Pamela Smith.



William Carey College Theatre Department

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Refugee now helping others to see Christ

ATLANTA, Ga. (BP) — Having risked their lives to escape from communist Romania in 1980, Mark Hobacovich and his friends had just arrived as refugees in Australia when a stranger showed up at their door.

"Good morning, boys!" the man said in their native tongue. It was Sunday morning, and a member of a local Romanian-speaking church invited them to the morning service. Because of the timing of the visit and familiarity of the language, Hobacovich accepted.

Today, as a missionary and church planter, Hobacovich is passionate about making it possible for others to have the opportunity of worshipping in their own "heart language" — the language they use when they relate most intimately with God and others. Even among immigrants who are reasonably comfortable with English, communication barriers sometimes get in the way of true worship.

"I'm sold-out to this ministry because I am a recipient of it," he said.

Hobacovich and his wife Christine are among nearly 5,200 missionaries in the United States and Canada supported by the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. They are featured during the March 7-14 Week of Prayer and North American Mission Study, which this year focus on *The World at Our Doorstep*.

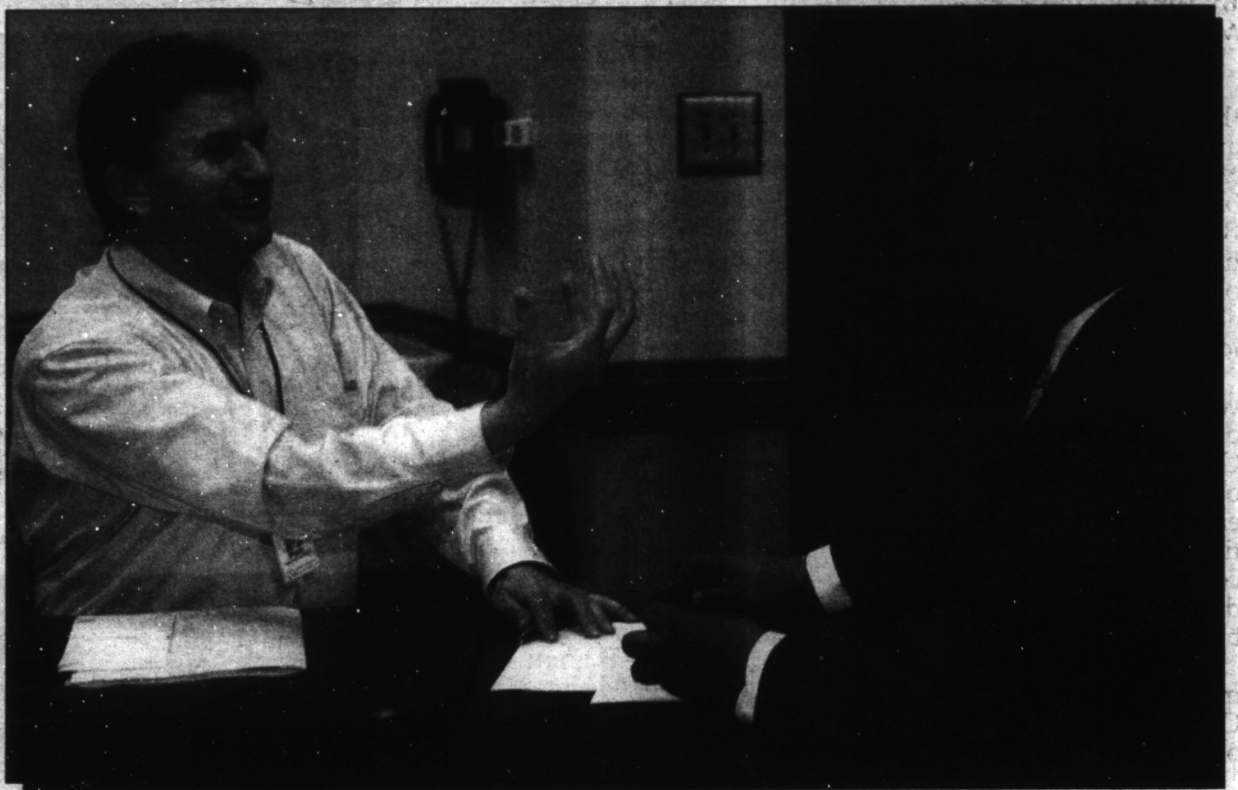
As a national missionary with the North American Mission Board (NAMB), Hobacovich previously worked to help European, Middle Eastern, Brazilian and Haitian churches plant new language congregations. In January he began serving on the staff of NAMB, where he coordinates the work of national missionaries working to help start churches among all people groups.

Conditions were harsh in communist Romania in 1980 when the 20-year-old Hobacovich and six friends risked imprisonment and even death to slip over the border into neighboring Yugoslavia. Even then, he spent about 20 days in jail before finally being granted refugee status.

That's why he was so receptive when the Romanian pastor showed up at his door. "We were kind of fearful, thinking, 'Was this real?'" Hobacovich said. "We found out that that man had gone to the office and asked if there were any new Romanian refugees."

Hobacovich had grown up in a Christian home and knew about God, but had never made a personal commitment to follow him. "I knew this was somehow God reaching out to me," he said. "And so I went to church."

With God already working on him through the trauma of the past few weeks and the love expressed by his new Romanian friends, it didn't take long for Hobacovich to respond to the Gospel.



PLANTING CHURCHES — Mark Hobacovich (left) meets with Jeff Anefilis, pastor of El Shaddai Haitian Baptist Church in Lawrenceville, Ga., at the North American Mission Board's offices in Alpharetta, Ga. As a national missionary and now as an NAMB staff member, Hobacovich helps start ethnic churches throughout the country. (BR special photo by Paul Obregon)

"I gave my heart to the Lord," he said. "That's when I really became free. I thought freedom comes by changing governments, but the real freedom is in Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior and from that day on my life took a different turn altogether."

The people of First Romanian Baptist Church of Melbourne discipled Hobacovich. He met Christine there, and they married in 1985. Shortly thereafter he felt God calling him to Bible college and vocational ministry.

It was while attending seminary in Brisbane, Australia, that he had his first opportunity to start a church. "We were planting a church without knowing we were planting a church," he said with a laugh. "We just did what seemed natural. There was a previous attempt to start a church there and some people came together and started Bible study. Slowly we hooked up with local church to get some space to meet."

The church grew quickly, as did the new believers in baptisms. Later, he was called to serve on staff of his home church in Melbourne — and after about nine months a call came from Nashville, Tenn., asking him if he had any interest in helping start another new congregation.

"We realized so vividly that this was God's will for us," he said. "Our family asked how we were going to do it, with no salary and no church, but both of us knew 100 percent, without a doubt, that this was where God wanted us to be."

They relocated to Nashville and started working on growing the Romanian Baptist Church there. It wasn't long before his skills for church planting were recognized by the association, which asked him to work as their language missions director beginning in 1995 and later became the church extension director for the association. In 2000, he was asked by the North American Mission Board to take a similar role on a national level.

His work as a national missionary was from a big-picture perspective, but the same principles applied. His goal was to find emerging communities of a particular ethnic group where there might be a few people interested in starting a church. He then worked with other churches to find sponsors and meeting places so the new church could be started.

"That is exciting, because I see that this God-given vision was caught by the people," he said, noting that part of his job now is to work with Romanian Baptist Fellowship leaders in developing strategies for implementing their goal.

"I see a day when the Lord will revive His people and church planting movements will be a reality in North America as in other parts of the world for the glory of the Lord Jesus." The foreign-born population of the United States is currently 33.1 million, 11.5% of the U.S. population.

More than 1,000 ethnic/language churches were started by Southern Baptists in 2002, the last year for which figures are available.

The World at Our Doorstep

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for North American Missions
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National Goal: \$54,000,000

www.anniearmstrong.com

The items below represent a sample of how Annie Armstrong Easter Offering gifts may be used.

- \$1.00 — 10 language evangelistic tracts for use by a literacy missionary.
- \$2.00 — 50 flyers to advertise a special event for a new church start.
- \$5.00 — ream of construction paper for use in a Backyard Bible Club or church start.
- \$10.00 — Bible in another language for an international student.
- \$15.00 — Sunday morning snacks (orange juice, donuts, paper products) in a new church start.
- \$25.00 — refreshments for up to 75 children attending a Bible study as part of a new church start.
- \$50.00 — a weeklong camping experience for one inner-city child.
- \$75.00 — building rental for one Sunday worship service in new church start.
- \$100.00 — printing for 1,000 postcards to advertise a new church.

The World
at our
Doorstep



National
Goal:
\$54,000,000

Legislators tackle bills of interest to Baptists

By Jimmy Porter, Executive Director
Miss. Baptist Christian Action Commission

The 2004 Mississippi Legislature is in the process of debating bills that will have an impact on the lives of all Mississippians. Following are a few of the bills being monitored by the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission. The list is not inclusive of all the bills that are of interest to the Christian community. The activity on these and other bills can be followed via Internet (www.lis.state.ms.us).

The House bills are identified as HB, while Senate Bills are identified as SB. The description of each bill is followed by a CAC recommendation on supporting or opposing it. All Mississippi Baptists are encouraged to contact their state representatives and senators about any legislation of concern. They may be contacted weekdays during the 2004 session at (601) 359-3770 or by utilizing the web site listed above.

If there are other bills for which information is desired, call the Christian Action Commission at (601) 292-3329, or toll-free outside Jackson at (800) 748-1651, ext.329.

Our Senators and Representatives have a very demanding task, and it is our Christian responsibility to pray for them as they make decisions that affect all our lives.

PRO LIFE

- **HB1624/SB2619** — Abortion Procedure Rights of Conscience Act that exempts providers, institutions and payers from participating in abortion procedures. **SUPPORT**

- **HB1525/SB2848** — Abortion Complication Act that provides accurate reporting of the complications that often occur after abortions. **SUPPORT**

- **HB429** — Revises the entities authorized to accept newborn children. **SUPPORT**

ALCOHOL/DRUGS

- **HB194** — Allows shipment of wine directly from out of state to consumers. **OPPOSE**

- **HB537** — Deletes the requirement for restaurants to have a certain minimum portion of revenue from food. **OPPOSE**

- **HB579/SB2942** — Creates an open container law and makes it illegal to have an open container in an automobile. **SUPPORT**

- **SB2594** — Allows for the home-brewing of beer. **OPPOSE**

- **SB2666/SB2855** — Authorizes the sale

and possession of light wine and beer at any qualified resort area and the sale of same in dry counties at clubhouses of certain subdivisions. **OPPOSE**

- **HB604** — Designed to prohibit consumption of alcohol by minors. **SUPPORT**

- **HB1054** — First-time drug and alcohol nonviolent offenders must go to rehabilitation. **SUPPORT**

DRUNKEN DRIVING

- **HB351** — Includes the death of an unborn fetus in manslaughter provisions. **SUPPORT**

- **HB572** — Creates separate offense for violating DUI laws with a minor as a vehicle occupant. **SUPPORT**

- **HB575** — Prohibits reduction of sentences for second or subsequent offenses. **SUPPORT**

- **SB2201** — Allows multiple counts for vehicular homicide. **SUPPORT**

DEATH PENALTY

- **HB133/684/810** — Provides for a moratorium and ultimately the abolishment of the death penalty. **OPPOSE**

- **SB2248** — Repeals the death penalty. **OPPOSE**

ABUSE/DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- **HB970/SB2982** — Establishes the Uniform Interstate Enforcement of Domestic Violence Protection Orders Act which means orders of protection issued in another state would be as valid if issued in this state. **SUPPORT**

- **HB1127** — Requires the offending party to pay costs of housing abused parties in shelter. **SUPPORT**

- **HB1340** — Requires sex offenders to make such disclosures as volunteer organizations. **SUPPORT**

- **SB2554** — Prohibits sex offenders from owning, working for, or volunteering for a child care service. **SUPPORT**

- **SB2558** — Makes sexual battery offenses conform to the same statutes of limitations as rape and various other offenses. **SUPPORT**

FAMILY

- **HB1414** — Establishes Covenant

Marriage as a form of marriage in Mississippi. **SUPPORT**

- **SB2267** — Damages are not awarded to a parent in a wrongful death action who has abandoned a child. **SUPPORT**

- **SC514** — Provides an opportunity to amend the Miss. Constitution to make same sex marriages void and defines marriage as a union between one man and one woman. **SUPPORT**

- **SC519** — Asks Congress to propose a Constitutional Amendment to define marriage as a union between one man and one woman. **SUPPORT**

TOBACCO

- **HB449/450/451/SB2808** — Prohibits smoking in family restaurants and in enclosed public places with certain exceptions. **SUPPORT**

- **SB2625** — Prohibits possession by minors under the age of 18. **SUPPORT**

GAMBLING

- **HB554/814/1064/1219** — Provides for a state lottery and/or a task force to study the legalization of a lottery. **OPPOSE**

- **HB426/490** — Allows our universities and community colleges to teach gaming-related courses. **OPPOSE**

- **HB843** — Allows legal gambling in any county that elects to do so. **OPPOSE**

- **HB813/1190** — Provides counties the opportunity to legalize horse racing. **OPPOSE**

- **HB1198** — Grants permission to place cruise vessels on permanent structure and specifies no shore-based gambling. **OPPOSE**

- **SB2005** — Legalizes electronic video machines in premises other than vessels. **OPPOSE**

- **HB1287** — Prohibits cash-producing or credit-producing machines on the premises of gambling establishments. **SUPPORT**

- **HB1334** — Authorize State Tax Commission to determine revenue subject to fees and taxes and provide access to all licensee revenue areas during audit. **SUPPORT**

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National Goal: \$54,000,000

www.anniearmstrong.com

Most North American Mission Board missions personnel are jointly funded with state Baptist conventions, associations and churches, and receive support from the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering. The 2004 goal is \$54 million — 100% of which will directly support missionaries and their ministries.

- In 2002, receipts to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering totaled \$49,245,244. Totals for the 2003 are available at www.AnnieArmstrong.com. Since its inception, more than \$970 million has been given through the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.

- NAMB's primary responsibility is to assist Southern Baptist churches in reaching the United States, Canada, and U.S. territories with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The agency provides assistance to churches, associations, and state conventions in church planting and evangelism, including soul-winning training, interfaith witness, and church and community ministries. Four priority emphases of NAMB are evangelism, church planting, mobilization, and missionaries.

- More than 5,200 missionaries, 2,400 chaplains (serving in military, institutions such as prisons and hospitals, and in corporate settings), and hundreds of thousands of mission volunteers (e.g., World Changers, Mission Service Corps missionaries) are seeking to reach the estimated 228 million unbelievers in the United States and Canada.

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FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

Opposing False Beliefs

Judges 6:1, 7-10, 12-14, 25-32

By Patsy Foster

All it took was forty years of peace for Israel to grow careless in their attitude toward sin. The results were devastating for them as a nation. The allure of sin had blinded them to the danger of serving other gods.

God was not blinded. He sent the Midianites, bitter enemies of Israel, against them. They invaded Israel, bringing their cattle, camels, and tents, and covered the land like grasshoppers. The children of Israel fled from them, hiding in dens, caves, and strongholds in the mountains, while fear and destruction prevailed in the land.

Remember the fear and sorrow of 911? Consider what it would be like to have your nation occupied by enemy

forces, with no place to hide. Imagine the pain of watching your family almost starve to death, as all of your crops are destroyed and your livestock stolen. Such were the conditions in Israel. The harsh reality was that they couldn't survive much longer without being totally wiped out. There were no allies to rescue them. Then they remembered God, who had never forgotten them and heard their cry.

God sent a prophet to remind his wayward people of how he delivered them from the bondage in Egypt and all that oppressed them, of how he drove out the heathen from before them and gave Israel their land. Judges 6:10 says, "And I said unto you, I am the



Foster

Lord your God: fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell, but you have not obeyed my voice." God reminded Israel of his mighty acts in their behalf before he pointed out their failure to obey his commands.

Just as now, God stands ready for his children to return to Him. He, the mighty Way-Maker, had a plan in place and a man to lead Israel back to Him. The Scriptures paint a rich picture of Gideon threshing wheat in secret by the winepress. Since Israel no longer had grapes left, Gideon probably felt that he could thresh his wheat there without being discovered. How startled he must have been when the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor (6:12)." Gideon's response was, if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where is the God of miracles our

fathers told us about?

Judges 6:14 says, "And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?" What a commission Gideon received from the Lord, but how unqualified and unprepared he felt!

God had a plan to use Gideon, just as he has a plan to use us for His glory if we will make ourselves available to him. Helen Keller said, "I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; I will not refuse to do something I can do."

Gideon chose to do what he could do, and that something was to believe God. In faith, he took with him ten servants, by night, to his fathers land to pull down the altar of Baal and cut down the grove by it. In Judges 6:26 God instructs him to "...build an altar unto the Lord thy God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the

wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down." God wanted more than just the idols torn down — he wanted true worship re-established in the land.

Gideon's obedience brought an uproar from the men of the city, who wanted to kill him. Gideon's father, Joash, stood with him, telling the angry mob that if Baal was a god, then let him plead for himself. Gideon's courage in rejecting idolatry influenced an entire nation. He was but a man, but he did what he could do by opposing the evil and raising the standard of righteousness in the land.

Would you dare to be a Gideon? Would you dare to confront the false beliefs of even those you highly esteem? Would you dare to raise an altar to the Living God in the sight of all men by living a life of faithfulness and obedience to him?

Foster is a member of Murphy Creek Church, Louisville.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Christian Service

I Timothy 3:1-15

By Bobby McKay

Allow me if you will a bit of bias regarding this week's Sunday School lesson. Almost half of the third chapter of I Timothy is dealing with the qualifications of a pastor. I am a pastor's kid and have been a pastor myself for over four years now. I am convinced that there is no greater calling in the ministry than the call to pastor. To think that God has called out a chosen group of men to lead the New Testament church in carrying out the Great Commission is an awesome thought. Sadly, we as Southern Baptists have mistreated countless numbers of pastors in our lengthy history. What is also equally disturbing are the pastors that have mistreated the churches they were called to serve or have faced meltdown in ministry as a result of some ter-

rible misconduct. Let's face it, some of the qualifications aren't easy to understand but neither is being a pastor.

I. NOT A BOSS HOG (3:1-7)

There is an attitude among some pastors and churches that the pastor should have a dictatorial style of leadership. This is not only ridiculous, but it is also unbiblical. Nowhere in the qualifications of a pastor does it say that the pastor is the boss or C.E.O. of the local church. No one would disagree that pastors are called to be leaders, but the key is servant leadership.

In verses one through seven we see a wide variety of qualifications for the pastor. Verse two has been the subject of much debate in theological circles. While individual Christians and each autonomous church hold



McKay

to different beliefs, we can all agree that if the pastor is married, he must be dedicated to the covenant of the marriage relationship. He must be faithful to his wife and regard her as God's wonderful gift to both him and the ministry that they share.

Verse three has to do with self-control regarding alcohol and also to be a man who is both gentle and peaceable. The verse also closes out that he should not be money hungry. Verses four and five stress the importance of home life and verses six and seven relate to us the importance of humility and also that a pastor should have a pure and wholesome reputation with the lost in the community. Sometimes pastors can get tunnel-vision in "doing ministry" and fail to remember that lost people are an incredible part of their calling not only as the pastor of a church, but also a Christian.

II. NOT A BOARD OF DIRECTORS (3:8-13)

For years pastors have poked fun at how mean deacons can be. My fellow pastors, please don't fall into this trap. Your deacons are ordained servants of the church and should never be the subject of your negative jokes or illustrations. I have been blessed countless times by the selfless and humble acts of godly deacons. I am not saying that there is no such thing as a bad deacon, but for the most part, deacons truly love the church of which they are members and have a genuine desire to serve the membership.

Like the pastor, we need to recognize that deacons have scriptural qualifications. I have commented that the pastor is not the Boss Hog of the church. We would do well to see that the deacons aren't the board of directors either. One of the greatest blessings we are experiencing at Spring Hill Church is Deacon Family Ministry. Through this wonderful ministry our deacons are serving with a passion that thrills this pastor. My brothers and sisters, your deacons are there to serve you. Let them know how much you love them.

III. NOW BEHAVE YOURSELF (3:14-16)

Now if you have been reading this and saying to yourself, "That was a close one. I am neither a pastor or a deacon so I'm off the hook." — my friend, you are sadly mistaken. Nestled at the end of the chapter is some field where minimal sermon plowing has ever taken place. No doubt, the qualifications of pastors and deacons are at the heart of this chapter, but don't disregard the last three verses. It is important for all church members to see that even if they aren't the pastor or a deacon their spiritual gifts are a necessity for the local church to fulfill its mission.

There is a certain behavior expected of all church members. Paul explains in verse 15 the purpose of our lesson this week is that we will know how to act accordingly in the household of God, as the family of God. Yes, pastors and deacons have qualifications, but also ask yourself, "Am I honoring Him by my actions in His house?"

McKay is pastor of Spring Hill Church, Waterford.

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 6 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts

are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted.

All news items are subject to editing,

and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. Requests to return photographs must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

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PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES



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CHILD ABUSE - "THE LAST ONE"

By: JIMMY PORTER



Porter

The doorbell rang. Kirk, a brand new Christian, stood at the door visibly shaken by the events of the day. His medical profession had demanded him to examine the bodies of three homicide victims. The first two he handled fairly well, but the last left him tearful and trembling. The last one was a six-to-eight-month-old baby boy, beaten and scarred with cigarette burns all over his buttocks. All Kirk could say was, "Preacher, you have to pray for me and you have got to do it now. The last one got to me!"

Yes, the incident is true. Yes, it did happen here in our state several years ago. Yes, child abuse does take place in Mississippi. No community or child is immune. In Mississippi in the year 2000 there were 900 substantiated physical abuse cases, more than 1,700 neglect cases, 110 abuse and neglect, 899 sexual abuse cases, and 74 children suffered both emotional abuse and neglect. Child abuse ruins lives and causes further complications. One organization says that results of child abuse are clear. In one year more than 22,000 children were referred to state youth courts, more than two-thirds were sent to training schools, and 6,358 are under the supervision of a youth court counselor (wlbtc.com, 4/26/02).

Child Abuse is also a national problem. The President and the U. S. Department of Health and Human Service's Children's Bureau recognize April as "Child Abuse Prevention Month." Each week throughout our nation child protective service agencies receive more than 50,000 referrals.

In 2001, the last year for available data, about 1,300 children died of abuse or neglect. Overall, 903,000 children were victimized. Child protective service agencies across the country received 2.6 million referrals in 2001. Approximately one-third of the cases were substantiated after investigation. Of those confirmed, 59 percent suffered neglect, 18 percent

were physically abused, 10 percent were sexually abused, and 7 percent were psychologically maltreated. As is the norm, 81 percent of the abusers were the parents (www.cbsnews.com, 04/02/2003).

What is child abuse? Simply stated, child abuse is harm caused to a child by a parent, caretaker, or another person responsible for the child's safety. There are four major types of abuse and every parent, grandparent, and child care provider should be familiar with them. They are neglect, physical, sexual, and emotional abuse.

Child neglect comprises the largest number of substantiated cases.

Neglect is an ongoing pattern of inadequate care in four different areas. Sometimes

neglect is physical—refusal or delay in seeking necessary health care, child abandonment, inadequate supervision, and failure to provide for the child's basic needs.

Educational neglect is allowing children to miss school on a regular basis.

Emotional neglect happens when a child is subject to seeing spousal abuse or when he/she is allowed to use drugs and alcohol.

Medical neglect is the failure to provide health care (www.preventchildabuse.com).

Sexual neglect, even with infants, happens everyday in the United States. It is the misuse of a child for sexual pleasure or gratification. It potentially scars and damages a child for life. Physical abuse is the most visible form of abuse. Injuries resulting from beating, shaking, kicking, biting, burning or punching a child are classified as physical abuse. This inflicted injury is always unjustified, unreasonable, and unacceptable.

Emotional abuse is the least understood and sometimes the hardest to detect. It attacks the spirit of children and can eventually destroy them. Children subjected to emotional abuse often have very low self-esteem which can, after long periods of time, lead to self harm.

Who is it that can harm an innocent child? In 2001, 60 percent of the perpetrators were females with an average age of



31. More than half of the abused victims were white (51%); 28% were African American; 18% were Hispanic; and the other 3% were various nationalities (www.preventchildabuse.com).

Perhaps the most important question for us is what can we do about child abuse in Mississippi? Prevent Child Abuse America has developed "Five R's" we need to remember. First, we must raise the issue. It is not easy to talk about it—but we must. Contact elected officials, school personnel, and others to inform them to the seriousness of the problem. Be a good watchman—stay on the lookout for children who

abused children. Some of the signs are: nervousness around adults, short attention span, aggression, low self-esteem and frequent or unexplained bruises or injuries. Reach out to the kids and parents in the community. Work to improve your neighborhood and assist families that need support and encouragement as they develop their parenting skills.

Most importantly, report suspected abuse and neglect. You are bound by law to report child abuse to the authorities if you suspect it. Immediately call your local Department of Human Services or the Hotline (1-800-222-8000). This line is answered 24 hours a day, seven days a

week. This agency will investigate and bring charges if warranted. Remember, you do not have to identify yourself when you call—just call. It might save a life.

Failure to report abuse does carry severe consequences if one is proven guilty. Those convicted of failure to report abuse will be punished by a fine not to exceed \$5,000 or by imprisonment in jail not to exceed one year or both according to Mississippi statutes.

Jesus loved children and once said,

"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14, NIV). The Christian Action Commission, along with the Mississippi Baptist Children's Village, asks you to observe Child Abuse Prevention Sunday on April 25, 2004. Hopefully, with your help, the day will come when an act of child abuse will be "the last one."



display traits commonly found among those who are abused.

Remember the risk factors and monitor closely families that demonstrate traits commonly found in child abuse situations. These are families that abuse drugs and alcohol. They have difficulty in controlling their anger and seem to be uninterested in the wellbeing of their children.

Also, recognize the warning signs of

Church planted near 'Ground Zero' site

NEW YORK, N.Y. (Special) — It was Sunday morning in Lower Manhattan, and Southern Baptist pastor Gregg Farah decided to kick-off the Sunday morning worship service by strapping on a pair of inline skates and attempting to jump over his worship leader.

bottom of most priority lists, and new churches particularly are viewed with skepticism until they have passed the test of time.

"For a culture steeped in Catholicism or Judaism, starting a church is not going to make sense to a lot of people," Farah said. "New Yorkers are going to watch us and just wait and see whether we are going to be here long term, and whether our actions match what we're saying."

Farah and his wife Janine became North American missionaries in 2002, and in the spring of 2003 Mosaic Manhattan launched in the school below their apartment building.

The Farahs are among nearly 5,200 missionaries in the United States and Canada supported by the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. They are featured during the March 7-14 Week of Prayer and the North American Mission Study, which this year focus on The World at Our Doorstep.

The Farahs moved to New York from Southern California, where Gregg served on the youth ministry staff of Saddleback Church, known worldwide for its 'purpose-driven' approach to ministry. He grew up a New Yorker, living on the upper west side of Manhattan until he was 10 years old and then moving to suburban Connecticut. During his college years, he lived on the West Coast.

"During my 15 years on the West Coast, I knew it was just a matter of time before coming home," he said, "and during the last five years God made it clear that this was the time."

The Farahs had been planning to plant a church in metro New York as part of Southern Baptists New Hope New York emphasis in the city. After the terrorist attack of Sept. 11, 2001, those plans began to accelerate. A church was being planned in

the Battery Park neighborhood most directly affected by the attack, funded largely through contributions to Southern Baptist entities for long-term relief efforts for those affected by the tragedy. They were asked to consider leading the project, and a visit in December 2001 settled the matter.

"We fell in love with Battery Park City," said Gregg. "We started visiting apartment buildings and had a number of spiritual conversations with people. During those walks in the neighborhood, Janine and I knew this was home."

"I remember feeling that God wanted us to come here," added Janine. "The needs were so great. How could we ever meet those needs? But we knew this wasn't about us. It was very much about God — and God continued to remind us of that."

They actually moved to the city in the spring of 2002, and immediately began getting to know people. Like many church planters, they met other Christians who shared a desire to plant a church, and it wasn't long before they began meeting as a core group in the Farah's apartment. As their study grew, they moved their meeting into a hotel meeting space before officially launching Mosaic Manhattan in the spring of 2003.

In just one of the ways God has moved in the work, they were able to rent space in the school housed at the bottom of their apartment building — the first church in the city ever to achieve such a privilege after a court ruling made it possible.

Worship services do sometimes include the unusual, like a pastor skating across the stage or an artist interpreting the sermon through a painting as it is being preached.

People are responding. The church baptized four within a few months of launching services, and others have indicated on response cards they have made professions of faith before going through baptism or church membership.



NEW CHURCH — Gregg Farah (right), pastor of Mosaic Manhattan, and Dylan Jackson (left) set up a sign in front of the school where the church holds worship services. (BR special photo by Ken Touchton)

It was a decidedly different approach to introducing a sermon about taking risks for God, but there's a lot about this church that's unusual. The risks Farah and others involved in the church face are far greater than a spill on Rollerblades.

This is Mosaic Manhattan, meeting in a school auditorium just two blocks up Manhattan's Westside Highway from "Ground Zero." It's an area where evangelical churches traditionally have been near the

Bibliocipher

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TR NTEN TENT EH RED,
ARN TSU TRED OTEN
NTR WKSDSN WESNT
GHNQ NTR BTGDBTRW;
NQ TSU NTEN
QPRDBQURNT OSAA S
CSPR NQ REN QJ NTR
NDRR QJ ASJR, OTSBT
SW SH NTR USLWN QJ
NTR KEDELSWR QJ CQL

DRPRAENSH NOQ:
WRPRH

Clue: U = M

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Luke 2:7

Pham: from Vietnam prison to Georgia ministry

ATLANTA, Ga. (Special) — God has uniquely protected An Van Pham so that he could serve as a Southern Baptist missionary in Georgia. His father was killed in front of him during the war in his native Vietnam. After accepting Christ, he was imprisoned but was reaching so many people for Christ he objected to being released. He and his family survived a death-riddled voyage as they escaped Communist Vietnam.

Today, Pham helps start and support Asian churches in Georgia. He and his wife Lienhoa, are among nearly 5,200 missionaries in the United States and Canada supported by the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions. They are featured during the March 7-14 Week of Prayer and the North American Mission Study, which this year focus on The World at Our Doorstep.

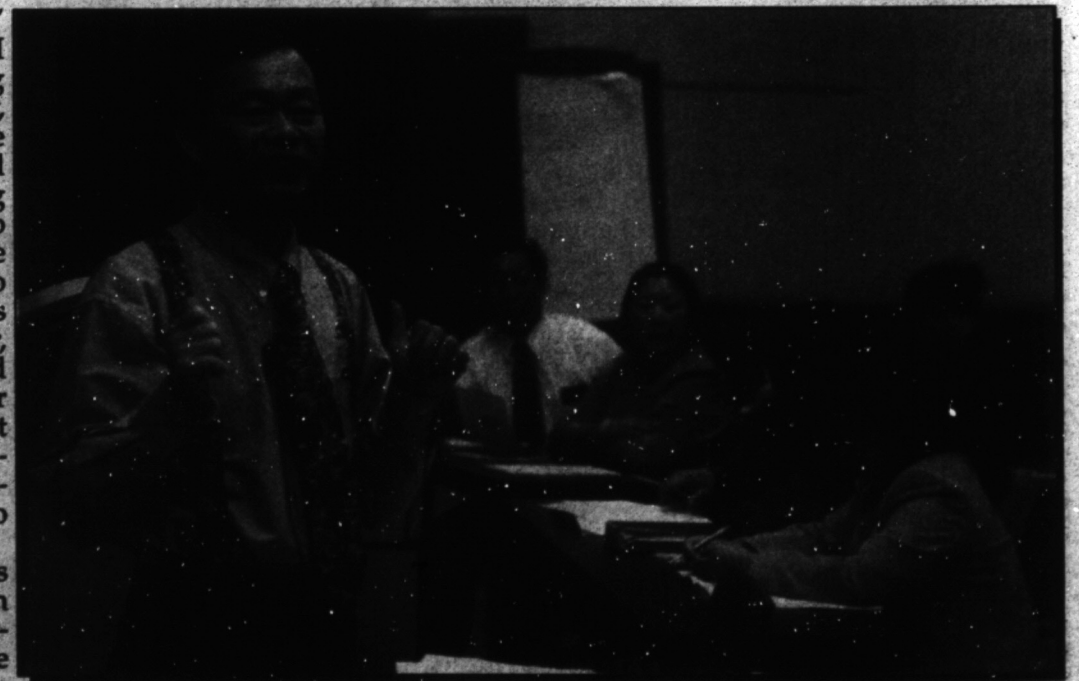
Life was not easy when Pham grew up in war-torn South Vietnam. Active in church, he was baptized at age 12 but one day the war, which had raged around him but never touched him, came to his village.

"Something happened the night the communists came to my village and killed my father

in front of me," he said. "I remember seeing my father's body, his blood on the ground, and wondering where I would go for eternity if the communists also killed me? I was barely a teenager, but I understood that my father was with Christ that night because he had accepted Him into his heart."

In 1975 he was jailed along with thousands of others who were known to be sympathetic to the Americans.

Late one night Pham, his wife, baby son, and 120 others — covered by a simple fish net — fled the country in a small boat. After many days their engine failed and they began to drift on the sea. Many died due to starvation and lack of water and their bodies were slipped over the side, but the survivors eventually were rescued off the coast of Thailand. A



TEACHING FROM EXPERIENCE — An Van Pham (standing) serves as an instructor during a Multi-Ethnic Basic Training conference for church planters at the Georgia Baptist Convention offices in Atlanta. (BR special photo by Paul Obregon)

Southern Baptist missionary carried his son — who they thought was dead and had almost thrown overboard — to a hospital where he revived. The three-member family lived in a refugee camp until they were able to immigrate to the United States.

Pham was appointed as a Southern Baptist missionary in 1987, working with the Georgia

Baptist Convention.

With the same dedication he had in prison, today Pham travels the state as he helps plant churches among the growing Asian population. Just as in his prison days, he finds himself winning unbelievers to Christ, helping to train them, and then sending them out as missionaries to their friends.